

MODES OF TRANSPORTATION a hundred years apart are pictured in this interesting photo taken years ago on a

special occasion at the Cedar City Airport. The oxen were owned by G.R. Parry and the ox skinner was Edwin Higbee.

# Flying's Come Long Way in Fifty Years

By JESSIE NILSEN

Among the aviation pioneers in Utah County were Vern J. Carter and Delles F. Nilsen, Cousins, who flew a Lincoln Standard plane starting about 1926.

Vern made flying a business and taught students to fly in Lehi, Draper, Salt Lake, Ogden, and elsewhere. He was in the flying business until he died in August 1966 in Lehi.

Delles, of Palmyra, earned his flight license by taking instruction from Vern. He flew until about 12 years ago—mostly as a hobby, but he logged many hours flying for fun and taking his family and friends for rides.

The two men noted many changes in aviation during the years. Some of these were reviewed recently by Bill

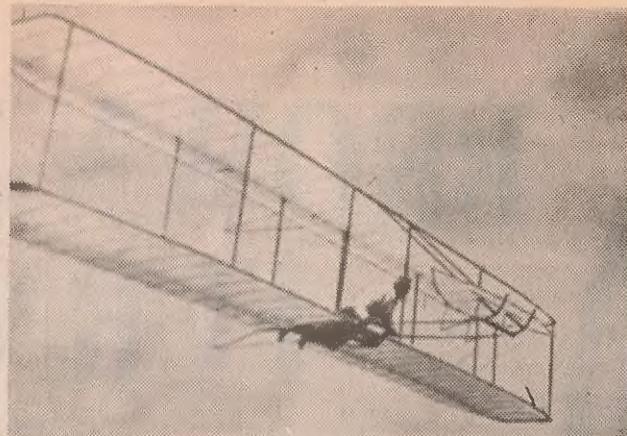
Devenish, veteran instructor at the Provo Airport: From the "stick" control to wheel control; fabric-covered planes to metal-covered; stronger construction; change of tandem seat arrangement to "side by side"; development of radio-controlled flying; water-cooled engines to air-cooled ones.

At the time Vern Carter and Delles Nilsen started flying, there were few regulations; pilots practically had the sky to themselves. Spins and loops were common — outlawed now for safety.

Runways, airport facilities — everything has been improved and revolutionized. Flight speeds have increased dramatically. Aviation has come a long way in the past 50 years indeed.



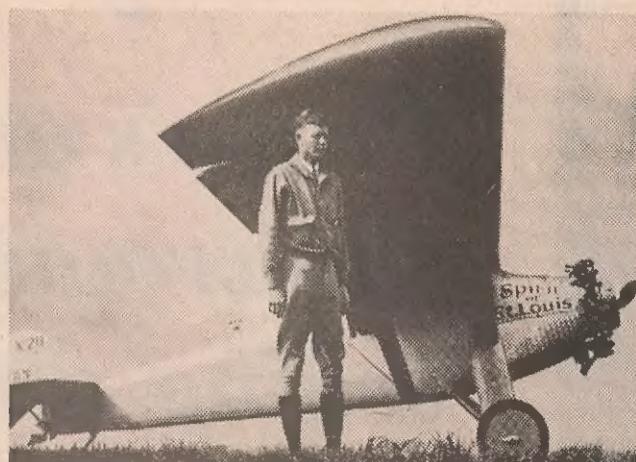
VERN J. CARTER, left, and Delles F. Nilsen, photographed standing in front of old Lincoln Standard Airplane owned by Mr. Carter about 45 years ago, at the north end of where the Provo Airport is now located.



ORVILLE AND WILBUR WRIGHT'S modified number three glider was flown at Kill Devil Hill, N.C. in 1902, before Orville piloted a power-driven heavier-than-air machine at Kitty Hawk, N.C. Dec. 17, 1903. (Institute of Aerospace Sciences Photo)



AVIATION PLAYED a role in World War I action in Europe. Sketch from Funk and Wagnalls Company depicts American Cavalry of the Air in action.



CHARLES LINDBERGH stands beside Spirit of St. Louis plane in which he flew the first nonstop solo flight between New York and Paris in 1927.

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# Some Aviation Milestones

By SCOTT CANDLAND

From the shoreline sands of Utah Lake to a modern airport that will handle everything to and including DC9s and 727's that is, in brief, the span of aviation of the Provo area.

Back in the years preceding and following 1930, a group of pioneer aviation enthusiasts lifted old war built Jennies and similar crafts off the sands of Utah Lake's shoreline and nearly always managed to get them back down again in the manner intended.

Probably the first thing besides a bird that ever flew in Provo was a barnstormer who appeared about 1915 in a "crate" not greatly improved from the one the Wright Brothers first took into the wild blue yonder. In the memory of old Provo residents, it was one of those museum relics pieced with the rudder pedals out in front of the seat, and nothing between the seat and the ground but a few strands of wire.

## Other Airports

The Provo Airport, though it is by far the largest in the immediate area, is not the only air facility available.

There are paved landing strips at the Springville-Spanish Fork Airport, and at Lehi as well as unpaved strips on the Saratoga Amusement Park ground as well as on a farm near that park.

In Wasatch County, a nice little air facility is situated just outside of Heber, while Nephi also provides an airport facility for Juab County.

Active interest in aviation did not get underway in Provo except for sporadic visits from barnstormers, until about 1926 when Vern Carter and Milo Morrill purchased an old Standard and began flying it locally. Morrill met the fate of many pioneer pilots when he crashed and was killed in Salt Lake.

## First Tragedy

Provo's first air tragedy occurred in 1928 when Henry Huff, an Ogden man then living in Payson, and Roy Griffin, also of Payson crashed and were killed south of the present airport.

Provo's second major air mishap occurred in late 1938 when Charley Corbell, an early Provo pilot, crashed and was killed. His wife and another passenger Leonard Thatcher also perished in the crash in the vicinity of the old airport east of the municipal golf course.

Corbell was one of a group of early Provo aviation enthusiasts which included Willis Madsen, George Kimber, Mike Jense, Elmer J. Smith and others. Merrill Christopherson entered the scene a little later and played a leading role in aviation here.

Jense, still active in local aviation today as the manager and owner of Central Utah Aviation based at the Provo Airport, stated that Corbell's accident "pretty well put a damper on aviation in Provo for a while."

Jense performed his first solo flight on Oct. 5, 1933 when he was 17 years old. He has been actively engaged in flying ever

since. He explained that the planes flown in those early days were usually World War II types with water-cooled engines. "Those engines quit quite regularly," he recalled, "but of course it didn't make much difference because we didn't have any regular landing fields anyhow."

## Change in Location

From the lakeshore sands which Jense and his flying pals first used, aviation branched out to the area southeast of Provo in the old First Ward pasture owned by the city. The exact location of the 179 acres was south of 9th South and east of the Timp Golf Course. That land was added to the 287 acres already owned and it was decided to make an airport out of the combined land.

A WPA project was secured for the project in 1936. In that year a hangar was built which is still being used today, and the field was leveled and drained.

In 1940 the city, in search of more space, bought a beet field near Utah Lake north of the present site. Her a hangar and field was constructed, mainly through an N.Y.A. project.

In 1941 came the decision which gave Provo an airport far ahead of most communities its size in the United States. The tragic Pearl Harbor event occurred at that time, and the government decided that a second line of defense was required. Provo, as well as many other Utah cities, was chosen by the government as a sight for a major airport.

The sight for the new airport was moved south to the present location, and work started on what was to eventually be an \$822,636 project.

The airport, when completed, had the longest runways of any in the state except for the field at Hill Air Force Base.

## Pilot Training Starts

Pilot training on a mass scale in Provo began in 1940 when, largely through the efforts of Merrill Christopherson, another Provo aviation pioneer, a national defense flight training program was secured.

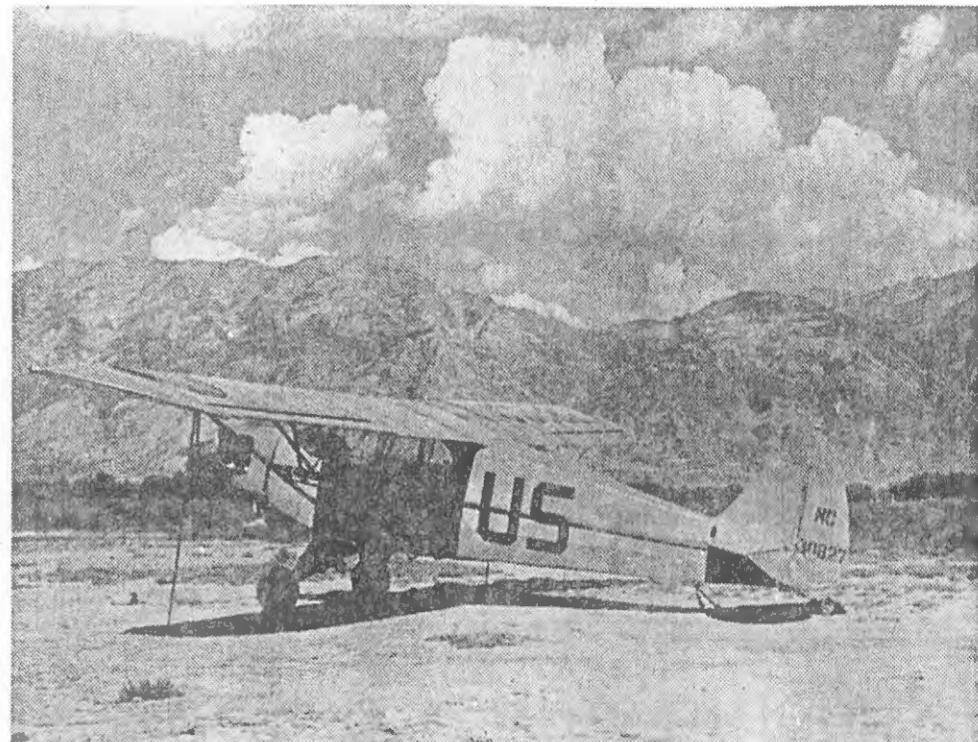
Merrill and his wife were the owners of Provo Flying Service, the original flying service at the airport. They later organized the Christopherson Travel Service.

In 1946 Eddie Poe, Keith Jacobs and Jense started their Central Utah Aviation Service, which is still operating today. The business of teaching people to fly, at one time a rather exclusive venture with a relatively few pupils has mushroomed to big business proportions with the numbers of Provo trained pilots now reaching the thousands.

Though there are no regularly scheduled commercial landings at the airport today, it remains a fairly active place. There were approximately 88,000 takeoffs and landings last year, with gains in those numbers registered each year.

There are approximately 70 privately owned planes based at the airport with the smallest being a two place trainer and the largest a six place Aztec.

A Master Plan for improvement of the airport has been accepted by both the City and the Federal government that will allow for further expansion and improvement of the airport and will guarantee Provo continued excellent air facilities in the future.



THE CUB CRUISER 75 was the first plane owned by the Provo Flying Service. It was purchased in 1940. Many of Provo's first

flying students were taught in this plane. (Photo courtesy of Merrill Christopherson)



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1927 MODEL — CURTISS-WRIGHT, JR.  
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A DELUX AIRCRAFT in 1927 was this Curtiss-Wright model. The craft is covered with Razorback Fabrics being pushed at the time as the best covering available. The most unusual aspect of the plane was probably the

position of its engine, above the pilot in a "pusher" position. Some modern planes today are returning to the same arrangement. (Photo courtesy of Mike Jense.)